

VZCZCXR00014  
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM  
DE RUEHBK #1658 0791022  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 201022Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5705  
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 001658

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2017  
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL KDEM TH  
SUBJECT: THAILAND'S REPORT CARD, SIX MONTHS POST-COUP

Classified By: Political Counselor Susan M. Sutton, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: In a TV broadcast on March 20, RTG agencies and the coup council gave their assessments of their progress since the September 19 coup d'etat. Representatives of the Council for National Security and several government agencies assured the public that they supported democracy, the fight against corruption, and the rule of law. This effort to improve their outreach to the public is long overdue. However, the public relations effort is unlikely to slow the decline in their popularity, as the government has, unfortunately, few solid accomplishments to show. End summary.

¶12. (C) Since seizing power, the Council for National Security (CNS) and the government have been particularly inept at public relations. In recent weeks, they appear to have taken to heart some of the criticism of their public outreach, and have tried to improve their image. On March 20, the country's leadership and key government agencies appeared on TV in a two-hour broadcast to give themselves a "report card" on their accomplishments six months after the coup that toppled former Prime Minister Thaksin.

MEET THE PRESS

-----

¶13. (SBU) During a March 20 broadcast, The CNS, the National Legislative Assembly, and seven representatives of government agencies gave briefings on their work since the September 19 coup. Council for National Security (CNS) Chairman General Sonthi Boonyaratglin reported to the public that Thailand had fallen into a state of dictatorial capitalism in the Thaksin era. The CNS had in effect restored democracy 12 days after the coup, by virtue of its promulgation of the interim constitution, appointment of Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, and establishment of independent bodies to provide checks and balances. Sonthi said he was determined to follow the rule of law in pursuing corruption cases against Thaksin. He also asserted the CNS -- which exercised enormous influence in forming the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA) -- was not directing the work of the CDA's Constitution Drafting Committee, although Sonthi explained that the CNS "monitors closely" the various independent government organizations.

¶14. (SBU) Other agencies similarly pledged to work toward cleaning up corruption and ensuring a return to elected government. A member of the Constitution Drafting Committee assured the public that the new constitution would be ready on time and approved in the referendum. Acting Police Commissioner Seripisut Temiyavej said police officials were investigating six possible lese majeste cases against deposed Prime Minister Thaksin. The Election Commission discussed their role in the transition back to democratic governance; the agencies with a role on corruption investigations (the Attorney General, the National Counter-corruption Commission

and the Assets Examination Commission) also gave reports.

COMMENT

-----

¶5. (C) The government/CNS have earned the criticism they've gotten for their weak public relations strategy. Today's marathon "report card" briefing is unlikely to do much to slow the decline in public support for the lackluster leadership. Former PM Thaksin enjoyed the limelight, projecting a self-assured confidence that went over well on TV. None of the current leadership has commensurate skills. Their PR efforts are further hampered by having relatively few accomplishments to report.

BOYCE